

## Message Text

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ACTION AID-31

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FM AMEMBASSY LAGOS

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C O N F I D E N T I A L LAGOS 04262

AIDAC

C O R R E C T E D C O P Y FOR ADDING AIDAC CAPTION

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS:

SUBJECT: NATIONAL POPULATION COUNCIL (NPC)

SUMMARY

AFTER LANGUISHING AT SEVERAL BUREAUCRATIC LEVELS FOR MORE THAN A YEAR

,

AND AFTER REPEATED PROMISES THAT THE NATIONAL POPULATION COUNCIL CALLED FOR IN THE SECOND NATIONAL DEVELOPMENT PLAN WOULD BE ANNOUNCED, HAVE RECEIVED INFORMATION THE NPC WILL BE FORMALLY AND PUBLICALLY INAUGURATED MAY 19. END SUMMARY.

1. INSTITUTION OF THE NPC HAS HAD A MOST CHECKERED BACKGROUND. IT WAS FULLY ANTICIPATED THE COUNCIL WOULD BE WORKING IN EARLY 1974. LATER IT WAS DECIDED TO MAKE ITS ANNOUNCEMENT A HIGHLIGHT OF WPY, AND LATER IT WAS PLANNED TO ANNOUNCE THE COUNCIL DURING THE WPC BUCHAREST MEETING.

2. AFTER MONTHS OF DISCUSSION LATE '73 EARLY '74, IT WAS DECIDED COUNCIL MEMBERSHIP WOULD BE DETERMINED BY POSITIONS IN PUBLIC AND PRIVATE SECTORS RATHER THAN BY PERSONAL STATURE OR REPUTATION. CONFIDENTIAL

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THE LIST OF MEMBERS THIS METHOD PRODUCED SHOWED 18 OF 21

MEMBERS FROM ONE ETHNIC GROUP, AND THEREFORE NOT REPRESENTATIVE OF THE COUNTRY. THEREAFTER BEGAN AN INTENSE, EMBARRASSING STRUGGLE WHICH BROUGHT PROGRESS IN ESTABLISHING THE COUNCIL TO A VIRTUAL HALT. FOR A PERIOD IN LATE 1974 SOURCES REFUSED TO EVEN DISCUSS THE SUBJECT.

3. ONE SOURCE HAS INDICATED THAT AFTER A MEMBER OF THE POPULATION ESTABLISHMENT GAINED ACCESS TO HEAD OF STATE YAKUBU GOWON, GENERAL GOWON EXPRESSED SURPRISE THE NPC WAS STALLED AND REPORTEDLY ASKED WHY THE GOVERNMENT WAS BEING QUOTE SOFT UNQUOTE ON POPULATION MATTERS. HAVE NOT BEEN ABLE TO VERIFY STORY. GENERAL GOWON'S ATTITUDE WOULD NOT BE SURPRISING IN LIGHT OF HIS REMARKS IN MAY 1974 SENT TO THE INAUGURAL MEETING OF THE POPULATION ASSOCIATION OF AFRICA (PASSAF) AT IBADAN (POUCHED PREVIOUSLY). HOWEVER, IT SHOULD BE NOTED THAT FOLLOWING THOSE COMMENTS NOT A SINGLE EDITORIAL OR PUBLIC FIGURE GAVE SIMILAR OR SUPPORTING VIEWS, WHICH POINTS UP AGAIN THAT EVEN IN A MILITARY STATE THE HEAD OF GOVERNMENT DOES NOT SET POLICY BY STATEMENTS.

4. FROM A MOST RELIABLE SOURCE WE HAVE LEARNED THAT WHEN THE SUPREME MILITARY COUNCIL WAS REVIEWING THE THIRD NATIONAL DEVELOPMENT PLAN, THERE WAS SOME SURPRISE EXPRESSED THAT THE POPULATION POLICY STATEMENT IN THE PLAN WAS SO WEAK, BUT FEELINGS WERE NOT STRONG ENOUGH ON THE MATTER TO SEND THE STATEMENT BACK FOR REDRAFTING.

5. EVEN IF IT WAS GENERAL GOWON'S INTERVENTION WHICH BROUGHT THE NPC ISSUE OFF DEAD CENTER, A VIABLE COUNCIL IS FAR FROM ASSURED. THE FOLLOWING MUST BE NOTED:

A) THE NPC SECRETARIAT WILL BE THE CENTRAL PLANNING UNIT OF THE FMEDR. WHILE SOME LOWER ESCHELON PLANNING OFFICERS ARE ENTHUSIASTIC ABOUT A NATIONAL POPULATION POLICY AND PROGRAM, THE HEAD OF THE UNIT, MR. G.P.O. CHICKELU, HAS EXPRESSED VIEWS ON POPULATION MATTERS THAT ARE RESISTENT TO GOVERNMENT SUPPORTED FERTILITY CONTROL PROGRAMS, ALTHOUGH THERE IS SOME INDICATION CHICKELU IS MORE OPEN TO THE QUESTION TODAY. CHICKELU BELIEVES THAT A NATIONAL FAMILY PLANNING PROGRAM WILL NOT AFFECT FERTILITY AS RAPIDLY AS WILL SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC ADVANCEMENT AND THAT THERE IS A CORRECT TIME FOR FP. HAVE LEARNED SECOND

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HAND THAT CHICKELU BELIEVES THAT AFTER A CERTAIN ECONOMIC/ SOCIAL THRESHOLD HAS BEEN REACHED FP FOR NIGERIA IS INEVITABLE.

B) THE COUNCIL HAS NO BUDGET AND WILL HAVE TO RELY ON FUNDS MADE AVAILABLE FROM THE SECRETARIAT.

C) THERE HAS BEEN CONTINUING DISCUSSION OVER THE APPOINTMENT OF DR. G.A. WILLIAMS AS CHAIRMAN OF THE NPC. WHILE DR. WILLIAMS IS HIGHLY REGARDED, NOT ALL MEMBERS OF THE POPULATION ESTABLISHMENT ARE HAPPY WITH THE APPOINTMENT. IN LIGHT OF

PROBLEMS GETTING THE NPC TOGETHER, PERHAPS NO PERSON WOULD BE ACCEPTABLE TO ALL MEMBERS.

D) TECHNICALLY THE NPC WILL REPORT TO THE FMG THROUGH THE COMMISSIONER OF THE FMEDR. ADEDIJI IS LEAVING THAT POST FOR ECA AND HIS SUCCESSOR'S VIEWS ON POPULATION MATTERS WILL HAVE MUCH TO DO WITH THE COUNCIL'S EFFECTIVENESS.

6. THE NPC HAS BEEN INSTRUCTED TO UNDERTAKE THE FOLLOWING TASKS: (A) DEFINE AND RECOMMEND FOR FMG CONSIDERATION A NATIONAL INTEGRATED POPULATION POLICY, (B) RECOMMEND PLANS AND PROGRAMS FOR IMPLEMENTING THE POLICY, AND (C) RECOMMEND WAYS IN WHICH FUNDS FROM INTERNAL AND EXTERNAL SOURCES CAN BE OBTAINED FOR ACCEPTED PLANS AND PROGRAMS AND COORDINATE THESE FUNDING EFFORTS. THE NPC WILL ADDITIONALLY BE ASKED TO PRESENT A DEFINITION OF ITS ROLE TO THE FMEDR.

7. WHILE WE HAVE NOT GAINED ACCESS TO THE COUNCIL'S MEMBERSHIP LIST, THE FOLLOWING ARE KNOWN TO BE MEMBERS: DR. WILLIAMS, CHAIRMAN; DIRECTOR OF NISER; A TOP OFFICIAL IN THE MINISTRY OF EDUCATION; AN OFFICIAL OF THE MINISTRY OF INFORMATION; THE SENIOR MEDICAL ADVISOR FMOH; PRESIDENT OF THE NATIONAL COUNCIL OF WOMEN (ONLY WOMAN ON COUNCIL); AN OB/GYN FROM SOKOTO; A PHYSICIAN FROM MAIDUGURI; THE CHIEF STATISTICIAN OF THE FMG; THE PERMSEC, NORTH CENTRAL STATE MOH; CONTROLLER OF MEDICAL SERVICES SOUTH EASTERN STATE; THE CHAIRMAN OF THE FPCN GOVERNING BODY AND COMMISSIONER OF WESTERN STATE; THE EXECUTIVE SECRETARY OF FPCN; CHAIRMAN, DEPARTMENT OF SOCIOLOGY, UNIVERSITY OF IBADAN. MORE THAN HALF THE COUNCIL MEMBERS ARE KNOWN TO US, AND SEVERAL HAVE HAD SOME INVOLVEMENT WITH AID'S POPULATION PROGRAM. A WIDE SPECTRUM OF VIEWS ON POPULATION ARE REPRESENTED. IT IS SIGNIFICANT THAT NOT A SINGLE MILITARY PERSON IS ON THE COUNCIL, NOR A WELL KNOWN RELIGIOUS LEADER. IT IS ALSO IMPORTANT THAT OF THOSE MEMBERS KNOWN TO US, SIX ARE PHYSICIANS ALL OF WHOM SUPPORT FP THROUGH MCH. OF  
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THESE PHYSICIANS, ONLY DR. WILLIAMS HAS A BROADER THAN HEALTH VIEW OF POPULATION MATTERS.

8. WE BELIEVE POPULATION POLICY ISSUES ON VERGE OF BECOMING OPEN AND MORE IMPORTANT, BUT MUCH COULD DEPEND ON EFFECTIVENESS AND SPEED OF NPC WORK AND SECRETARIAT BACKSTOPPING.

9. WE HAVE QUIETLY SUGGESTED THAT IN LIGHT OF GENERAL GOWON'S POSSIBLE INTEREST IN THE MATTER, THE GOVERNMENT MIGHT WANT TO APPOINT MRS. VICTORIA GOWON, A REGISTERED NURSE, AS HONORARY CHAIRMAN OF THE COUNCIL AS A SYMBOLIC GESTURE FOR WOMEN'S YEAR AND TO HIGHLIGHT THE ROLE OF WOMEN IN ANY POPULATION POLICY.

10. WILL CONTINUE TO WATCH THE COUNCIL ACTIVITIES AND REPORT SIGNIFICANT EVENTS.

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